

FAX HEADER

DATE: March 23, 2000

TO: Paul Dabbs
California Dept. of Water Resources

FROM: Michael Nurre
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SUBJECT: Comments on Scoping for 'California Water Plan
Update', Bulletin 160-2003

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B160 Comments

(Nurre, page 1)

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Paul Dabbs
California Department of Water Resources
State of California

Subject: Comments on scoping for the pending California Water Plan Update, Bulletin 160-2003

Like her gold rush before, California is now experiencing her 'water rush'. The 'water rush', fueled by population growth, business and agriculture, is devastating the state's rivers, streams, bays and wildlife. These, the very basics of a healthy natural environment, have been nearly wiped out by many decades of the utter indifference of state and federal water policy. With the state's population growing toward 50 million, with agriculture's continued dependence on subsidized water, and with the state's environmental health under constant stress, water policy is the fulcrum of the viability of its rivers, streams, bays and wildlife. I urge you to include the following subjects in the scope of the next Water Plan Update.

Agriculture and urban users should pay the full cost of all water delivery and disposal. California's development is more than mature and absolutely no subsidies are needed to encourage more water uses. It is critical that all water costs are derived accurately. Any new water dependent business or agricultural activities should be discouraged, even forbidden, by policy and by cost.

What crops now produced in California are inappropriate in a water scarce environment? What policies and efforts could be made to shift agriculture away from such crops? And, similarly, what urban water uses are wasteful or unnecessary and could be discouraged or replaced. What conservation efforts could be required by law to conserve water usage?

What potential impacts of global warming should be considered in water policy?

The environment's water needs should be given the highest priority in that agriculture and urban needs are potentially unlimited and have no restraint except public policy and regulation. The natural environment is dependent on free flowing rivers and streams, it is unique and, once destroyed, can never be recovered. The water plan update should make clear that state policy requires strict adherence to all existing laws, regulations and project operations of environmental protection and restoration. It is critical that DWR have accurate estimates of current water use thereby avoiding agitation for new supplies when high estimates overstate future needs.

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DWR should team with environmentalists to describe the economic and social costs to the state of the ongoing destruction to the natural environment. Agriculture and urban interests are very quick to point out dire economic distresses when their water needs are questioned.

California is a magnificently beautiful land in which to live. Its life blood is its water. We should include in our water plan ways to remind the public of this fact. If we are to bleed the land to death we should all experience the guilt and shame. If we love the land we should all be knowledgeable of how to protect it.

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